

Problem/Project-Based Learning Process

1. Read and discuss the scenario.

The situation described in the scenario should be understood by all members of the class. After reading the scenario on the screen (if projected) and on the paper (if used as a handout), students will then break into small groups to begin to brainstorm using the KWHL Chart. Once brainstorming begins, students should individually and in groups revisit the scenario when they feel as though they may be “off track”. The instructor should facilitate this revisiting of the scenario occasionally through observation and feedback in the journals.

2. Brainstorm known facts.

Students will list what they bring to the situation given materials presented in the scenario and any prior knowledge they may have concerning the task on the KWHL concept map either in Inspiration® software or on a handout. All students bring something special to the group. During this process, students should be encouraged to list as many things as they know about the situation reserving criticism to the group at-large and accepting wild, seemingly irrelevant items. There will be a time when those items may make sense to the group.

3. Develop a problem statement.

After careful review of the scenario and the “knowns”, students should write a brief statement about what it is they are attempting to do. All groups will interpret this differently. Clues to helping to create this statement are in the last statement in the scenario and the mixture of “knowns”. As new information is found, this statement will change. Students should be encouraged to edit, revise, renew the problem statement as many times as is needed to come up with a solution.

4. Brainstorm what is needed to be known in order to solve the problem.

List what is needed to be known in questions form in order to solve the problem on the concept map. At this point each member should identify a role to play and gather information on the listed topics in order to move forward. Students should be encouraged to revisit the problem statement and the scenario in order to reaffirm that the process should move forward at this point.

5. Gather information and propose possible solutions.

Information gathering continues. Students should generate 5-10 properly constructed questions for research and begin seeking out expertise, meaningful internet searches that result in obtaining valid web resources, and should use the school library/media center in investigating their problem. Interviewing social studies teachers, business teachers, parents, and other members of the community is encouraged. Students may find other sources of information that they can bring into their investigation.

6. Revisiting Solutions.

As time permits, the group may entertain revisiting their problem, view optional alternatives to the ones examined, or move toward reporting to the group.

7. Offer solutions through Presentations.

Report to the whole class and selected faculty an action plan that seems viable given all the options entertained by the group. Students should be encouraged to present in ways that show uniqueness, but are encouraged to refer to the teacher rubric. These presentations can be posted to the course Wiki as an option. Journaling to the course Wiki is encouraged as well. Wikis offer the opportunity for multiple classes to collaborate in the project.

Ideally, this PBL should lead to more PBLs that take learning even further. The teacher may see the opportunity (or more content) that can be built based on student presentations. If you use a Wiki, a multiple class collaborative presentation can be brainstormed and built as a result of the multiple presentations given at the end of this unit.

8. Student Journals (Electronic, Hard Copy, Wikis as options)

Individuals will complete an individual journal with artifacts of research and a self assessment of their work on the cover of a folder to be distributed to all team members. This is the major individual assessment of the project. The following checklist / management chart will be distributed to all team members; and individuals will be accountable for recording their roles in the project and to collect artifacts for the project.